

Climbing Management Plan for Lincoln Lake

Libby Nye

Geosciences Department

MOTIVATION TO MANAGE

My project was to create a management plan for rock climbing at Lincoln Lake.

This plan would be a specific assessment of possible environmental and social issues centered around climbing.

The intent was to weigh the benefits and possible negative impacts of climbing for the area of Lincoln Lake and to ensure longevity of the area to sustain humans and the natural environment alike.

CLIMBING

For a thorough plan, initial information about Lincoln was gathered. This includes an overview of the natural area, the recreational activities Lincoln offers, the ownership and current policies.

Then, every aspect of each style of climbing was assessed for possible environmental and social impacts. The three styles of climbing at Lincoln Lake are:

- 1.Bouldering
- 2.Trad climbing
- 3.Sport Climbing

Within each of these styles of climbing, the environmental and social impact of the following aspects of the climbing experience was assessed:

- The approach
- The staging area
- The ascent
- The summit
- The descent

This analysis was conducted through hiking to all of the current climbing sites around the lake and comparing them to standards such as Leave No Trace (LNT) and other rock climbing environmental and social studies.

MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

Here are some examples of solutions for the impacts of each of the aspects of rock climbing at Lincoln Lake:

The approach- The approach can often be characterized by “climber trails,” which are unofficial trails that deviate from the main hiking trail system and can expedite erosional processes of the land surrounding a boulder or cliff band.

For high traffic areas, LNT advises establishing one central trail to discourage further erosion and soil compaction.

In low traffic areas, the method of dispersal when walking does not create a trail system and keeps the area minimally impacted by humans. (Leave No Trace)



Tim Wixted Sport Climbs at Lincoln Lake



An example of a chalked hold on a boulder problem at Lincoln Lake.

The Summit- This aspect of climbing is mainly manifested in bouldering when concerning Lincoln Lake. Typically, during bouldering, climbers will “top out” a boulder, or climb over the top of a boulder. This process can disrupt the delicate habitats that are on top of boulders. One method that can be encouraged would be “dropping off” (or not summiting) a boulder before climbing over the top, but this mindset may not be widely accepted due to the competitive standards of the sport. However, education of the plants indigenous to the area and their sensitive nature can be encouraged along with a healthy communication network between the climbing community and lake management.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

- Fostering open communication between climbers and management is essential. Studies have shown that boulderers who communicate with management of bouldering sites and local climbing groups are more likely to care for the natural areas they frequent (Frauman, 15-16)
- Sign in sheets that encourage feedback from all patrons of the lake are necessary for all groups to be satisfied.

MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

The Staging Area- The staging area is where the belayer or spotter stands and where gear is placed at the base of a climb. Along with erosion and soil compaction, this area is the most susceptible to potential human waste because a majority of the time spent climbing is spent in this area.

In the sport climbing area, the installation of a toilet in the parking area would be a necessary solution. The places available for a natural bathroom are not far enough away from the lake for sanitary purposes.

In the bouldering area, proper LNT techniques should be used. This can be encouraged by increased education provided by LNT seminars in conjunction with climbing organizations like The Access Fund and Arkansas Climbers Coalition. Also, simply posting proper LNT guidelines at the lake would encourage bathroom etiquette.

The Ascent/ Descent – This is the actual climbing or descending of the rock face. This can be characterized by permanent bolts drilled into the rock face, chalk stains and the displacement of vegetation on rock.

Most of the problems with the ascent arise from visual

disruptions like silver bolts and the contrast between the natural rock color and the white chalk stains embedded into the quartz sandstone. Because safety should be first and foremost, the impact can be lessened, but not entirely diminished. Using bolts with a dull luster and chalk that is the same color as the rock can help to blend the visual impact. Communication between climbers and other patrons should be fostered to establish expectations and encourage compromise.



Lincoln Lake

SUSTAINABILITY

Managed Systems- The creation of a management plan in a recreational area encourages the continuing use of the land while also protecting the natural environment from overuse.

Social Systems- In order to have a successful management plan, open communication between all parties concerned must be encouraged. This means being educated in a holistic way, from the perspective of management and climbers.

Natural Systems- It is possible to love our natural areas to death. In order to keep enjoying the environment, we must understand our surroundings and our impact on our ecosystems we frequent.

Built Systems- Simple things like constructing a trail network, installing a permanent bathroom and new parking lots have to be evaluated in a deliberate way for these solutions to work properly.

STUDENT IMPACT

In doing this project, I have learned to organize my thoughts in a way that helps an area I want to protect and continue to use.

I have learned about the current management of Lincoln Lake and opened a communication network between myself and management.

I have gathered a holistic perspective that considers possible negative impacts of an activity I greatly enjoy. I have gained the confidence to defend my point of view when considering all sides centered around rock climbing.

I have been equipped with an outlet for a cause I feel motivated and passionate about. In the future, this will give me a foundation to establish projects to better society and the environment on a larger scale.